



THE RHODESIAN JOURNAL OF ECONOMICS

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AFRICAN PARTICIPATION IN THE RHODESIAN ECONOMY

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MEANINGFUL PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN BLACK AND WHITE CAN ENSURE THE SURVIVAL OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

J. N. REDDY*

If man-kind is to realise the goal of one world — one society, the yawning gap which presently exists between the haves and the havenots will have to be progressively narrowed, if we are to enjoy a measure of peace and stability in this world.

For all practical purposes in Southern Africa the haves are Whites and the havenots people of colour and this situation therefore has racial overtones.

By and large the have-nots are in the main located in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the haves are represented by the economically powerful western world.

It follows that if we are to create conditions which will allow all people to realise their political aspirations and to enjoy an increasing measure of economic prosperity and social well-being, there is an urgent need for a new approach where people of different races must work together to achieve a common goal.

Therefore in Southern Africa where history has made it possible for Black and White to come together, it is the duty of both White and Black leadership to create the kind of society where men, irrespective of colour can all participate in the governing of their respective countries and share in the economic prosperity of their land.

I believe that only a meaningful partnership between Black and White can ensure the survival of Southern Africa by giving it political stability and a buoyant economy, both of which are essential prerequisites to ensure that the ordinary man and woman would increasingly enjoy a higher standard of living and in addition provide even better opportunities for the children of to-morrow.

The old era of colonial exploitation is a thing of the past and even in countries which have won their political freedom during the past 25 years foreign businesses which have no local participation can rightfully be construed as a new form of colonialism and in this connection, we are aware that in several countries in Africa, Government action had to be taken to allow the local people to share in the economy of their respective countries.

* Managing Director of the New Republic Bank Ltd. of South Africa and a leading member of the Indian business community in South Africa.

This is understandable, for political freedom becomes meaningless if the indigenous people do not have a reasonable share of the profits flowing from the exploitation of the material and manpower resources of their country.

It is only proper that the potential of the Blacks should be developed to the fullest extent so that they can play a meaningful role in the life of the nation and thereby make a positive contribution to the progress and prosperity of their country.

They should be given every possible assistance for training at all levels so that they may be suitably equipped not only to qualify for well-paid job-opportunities but in addition special consideration must be given to accelerate the promotion of industrial and other business ventures in which the Blacks can actively participate.

To make this possible a positive plan of action must be put into operation to enable an infra-structure for Black participation and progress to be realised as speedily as possible.

The educational programme should be so planned to provide amongst other things technical and vocational training and in addition a determined effort must be made to impart management and administrative skills to the Black people without which no worthwhile progress can be registered in the highly competitive society which is now emerging.

The mobilising of the financial resources of the Black people must receive priority and in this connection existing financial institutions could lend a hand in launching such institutions and by offering guidance in their formative years. It is desirable that in addition to banking institutions, serious consideration should be given to the launching of a life insurance company. Both the institutions mentioned above could progressively marshal the financial resources of the Black people and could help to fund business ventures and thereby make Black participation a reality.

The existence of such institutions will afford well educated Blacks an excellent opportunity of obtaining first hand experience in the workings of the financial world and consequently they will become well equipped to give both a direction and a lead to their fellow countrymen to plan and execute a programme of action to realise for themselves a fair share of their country's economic potential.

Political freedom alone without the necessary expertise and financial backing will not give any people a share of the economic potential and therefore, Black leadership must at all times give serious consideration to creating an infra-structure which will facilitate Black participation in the economy.

Generally speaking until recently there have been very few joint ventures involving Whites and Blacks in Southern Africa.

We are now living at a time when the Black man whose man-power and material resources are being exploited will not be content with merely work opportunities however generous the perks may be and the time is now ripe for a change to be made and a new philosophy must govern economic activity in Southern Africa. That new philosophy is a real and meaningful partnership between Black and White. For this alone will ensure progress, peace and stability in these countries.

The old order will be a thing of the past and cannot linger on for any length of time.

The new approach will recognise the legitimate hopes and aspirations of the Black people and the White entrepreneurs will be seen by them as a true partner, prepared to share with the people in whose land he is out to do business.

The old order where Whites will always remain bosses and the Blacks are going to be good workers is a thing of the past and it is therefore, the duty of Government and the more affluent White society to plan for the participation by Blacks, not only in labour but also in the share of profits.

If we entrust the Black men with responsibility they will have more than just their chains to lose and if they have got more than that to lose they will stand for orderly progress and become valuable members of a stable and progressive society.

The Black people represent the vast majority of the population of Southern Africa and consequently we have a duty to bring them in as partners and in order to realise this they have to be educated, their finances mobilised and encouraged to actively participate in economic activity.

In so doing you will bring forward a new kind of leader and increasingly these people will be able to help themselves and become responsible members of society.

Is this challenge something which is beyond the ability of the White man in Southern Africa? It cannot be an embarrassment for we are merely asking for the realities of the situation to be recognised, for White co-operation in this new approach would not entail any sacrifice but on the contrary would contribute to peace and harmony and mutual respect and understanding on the part of Blacks.

If an immediate start has to be made on this new role for the progress and prosperity of both Black and White of Southern Africa, I believe that the Governments in the various states should launch Development Corporations backed by State funds to promote participation in economic ventures by Blacks in partnership with Whites.

Corporations of the kind envisaged can play a meaningful and positive role in guiding people in developing societies in obtaining a stake in their land.

What is more the presence of these institutions will create the kind of confidence which will encourage foreign participants with the required skills and expertise to start up ventures in Southern Africa.

As the ability of the indigenous Black people to mobilise their own financial resources increases the equity held by the Government sponsored Development Corporation could be taken over by private Black Companies and shareholders

This pattern will emerge once the infra-structure has been firmly established and as the Black people become increasingly conscious of their responsibilities and the economic potential available within their respective countries.

On a more broader basis meaningful partnership between Black and White can contribute to the raising of the living standards of the Blacks of Southern Africa.

Presently much of the natural resources of Southern Africa are exported to the more developed nations of the world for processing and consequently the actual benefits flowing to the indigenous Black population is relatively small.

If the new concept of partnership can materialise it will create the kind of stability which will encourage the setting up of more processing industries within the countries themselves and thereby allow these countries to earn even more from the sale of the finished product.

This part of the world has been richly endowed by nature with mineral and water resources and I believe that by co-operation firstly between Black and White in their respective states and by promoting close economic links between the various states within Southern Africa it will be possible to realise an area of peace, stability and co-operation for the mutual benefit of all the people in this area.

Capital from within the region supplemented by foreign funds will help to generate economic activity within the area and by granting trade preferences to one another could encourage the flow of unrestricted trade.

The area has the potential for vast power generation and irrigation projects and why should there be not many more projects like the Cabora-Bassa Scheme where the power generated will be sold to adjoining countries and thereby earn valuable foreign exchange and in addition the water avail-

able for irrigation will give a new fill-up to agriculture and agro-based industries within Mozambique.

Similarly there are possibilities of co-operation in so many other fields for the common good of all.

Dr. Anton Rupert has on numerous occasions stated the role of the foreign investor to be that of one bringing benefits to the people in whose territory one is engaged in economic activity.

He has often reiterated that true partnership is the only means to help developing countries and has given ample proof of this dictum by the role which companies in the Rembrandt Group are playing in Africa and elsewhere in the world.

The concept of partnership between Black and Whites in Southern Africa must of necessity initially proceed at a slow pace, but after a well balanced infra-structure for Black advancement has been developed the concept of meaningful partnership between Black and White in Southern Africa will be increasingly applied to ensure that the prosperity of all the countries in Southern Africa is shared between Whites and Blacks in accordance with their respective contributions.

Address by Mr. J. N. Reddy to the 1975 Symposium of The Rhodesian Economic Society in Salisbury.
